Haj Pilgrimage

†2001. SHRI D.P. YADAV: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Muslims permitted by Government for Haj pilgrimage during the year 2001-2002;

(b) whether the number is more as compared to the last year;

(c) whether Government have made any arrangements for additional aircrafts for Haj pilgrimage through the Ministry of Civil Aviation along with the measures taken by Government to save them from the clutches of middlemen and commission agents; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE 'MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) The total number of Haj pilgrims, who went to perform Haj in Saudi Arabia through the Haj Committee, Mumbai, in the years 2001 and 2002, is as under:—

2001	—	71,133
2002		70,276

(b) No. Sir.

(c) and (d) The Ministry of Civil Aviation is responsible for making air transportation arrangements for Haj pilgrims going through the. Haj Committee, Mumbai. This year the Haj pilgrims were carried by 249 flights from 10 different embarkation point at Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Kozhikode, Lucknow and Srinagar. In order to improve punctuality and efficiency of operations, no private charters were deployed this year. The entire Haj operation was carried out by Air-India, Indian Airlines and Saudi Arabian Airlines, the national airline of Saudi Arabia. Air-India operated 90 chartered flights from 6 Indian stations-Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi, Lucknow, Kolkata and Kozhikode to carry approximately 29,000 pilgrims. Indian Airlines operated 52 flights

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

from Hyderabad and Srinagar to transport 11,000 pilgrims. The Saudi Airlines operated 100 flights to uplift approximately 30,000 pilgrims from Ahmedabad, Delhi and Mumbai. Air-India had deployed its own large capacity B747s and A310 aircrafts for this purpose. Air-India and Indian Airlines recorded an on-time performance of over 90% for the Haj flights. The first phase of outgoing flights started on January 15, 2002 and was completed on February 16, 2002. The return second phase started from February 26, 2002 and will last till March 29, 2002, when the last flight comes to India.

Pravasi Bhartiya Samman

2002. SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to institute a "Pravasi Bhartiya Samman";

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by Government to fulfil! long standing expectations and requirements of the Indian settled abroad?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) There will be a maximum of ten such Awards* The announcement of names of the awardees will be made on the Independence Day and Awards will be conferred on the ninth day of January every year on the occasion of 'Pravasi Bharatiya Divas' starting from the year 2003. The modalities of conferment of these Awards are under examination of the Government.

(c) The Government had set up a High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora under the chairmanship of Dr. L.M. Singhvi, MP to formulate appropriate policies for meeting the expectations and requirements of Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs). The Committee has submitted its Report to the Government on 19.12.2001 which is under examination by the Government.